

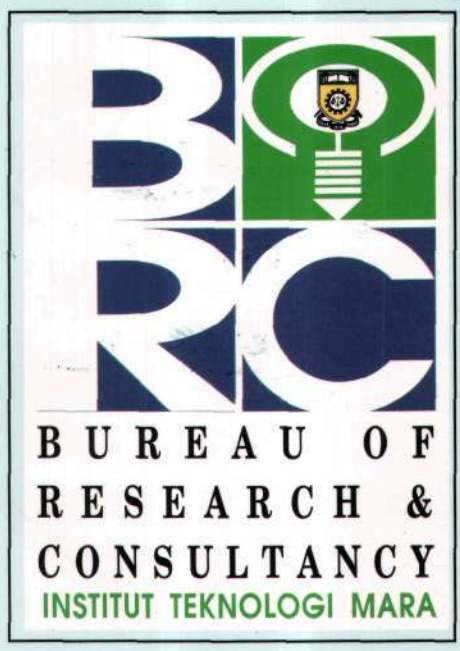
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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS IN THE RURAL AREAS TOWARDS HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN SARAWAK

by
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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the awareness and perception of students in the vast rural and interior areas of Sarawak to establish the socio-economic implication of problems, such as difficulty in accessibility, interior and inadequate school facilities or lack of trained teachers. These differences were compared with those in the urban/sub-urban areas to provide a cross-sectional view of the Forms 3, 4, 5 and 6 students of different ethnicity over nine divisions of Sarawak.

Keywords: Sarawak, Students, ethnicity, socio-economic, implication, perceptions, human resource development.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The era of rapid industrialization of Malaysia towards achieving Vision 2020 requires human resources with high-level technical skills, management and entrepreneurial capabilities as well as increased technological development and improved capital utilization. However, the problems which need to be resolved are the current lack of trained and skilled manpower and the low educational level of the present workforce. As human resource development begins in school, the school system needs to produce a continuous stream of well educated, disciplined and highly motivated school leavers to ensure the success of Vision 2020. In the demanding competitive environment of an industrialized country, school leavers (Forms 3, 5 & 6) with minimum reading, mathematical and communication skills will not be able to work effectively as part of a team to solve problems or to operate sophisticated machinery. They are not able to do the job well today, let alone the jobs of tomorrow which are geared towards high value added, skills and capital intensive products.

Sarawak, the largest State in Malaysia should be able to contribute towards human resource development but the educational level of the labour force particularly the indigenous labour force lags behind that of the nation as a whole. According to the World Development Report 1991, the increase of the average amount of education by one year for a developing country will raise the GDP by 9% (World Bank, 1991). *"Returns to investment have generally been higher in education than in physical assets. Economic rates of return to primary education in developing countries have averaged 26%, compared with estimated returns on physical capital of 13%. This suggests that lack of education is a greater obstacle to industrialization and development than lack of physical assets"*. (World Bank, 1987).

This study to investigate the awareness and perception of students in the vast rural and interior areas of Sarawak comes about because of the socio-economic implication of problems like difficult accessibility, inferior and inadequate school facilities or lack of trained teachers which means that the students there would not be able to perform better than those in the urban areas. As such, this study intends to quantify the differences in the awareness, perception, aspiration and attitudes of the students in the rural and interior areas compared with those in the urban and sub-urban areas. It provides a cross-sectional view of the Forms 3, 4, 5 and 6 students of different ethnicity in the rural and interior and urban and sub-urban areas spreading over the nine divisions of Sarawak. In addition, this study hopes to look into the reasons for the weaknesses in Science and Mathematics in schools so that the current trend of more students pursuing courses in Arts and Humanities rather than Science and Technology can be reversed. Thus, it is also necessary to look into the opinions of the teachers with regard to their students, their motivational level and their roles. The researchers feel that this study is the first of its kind in Sarawak.

Interviews and questionnaires were used in this study for the purpose of data collection. Three questionnaires were prepared for the students, teachers and principals respectively. Questionnaire A was devised to investigate the profile of the students, their awareness of current issues, their future intentions and their perceptions, Questionnaire B was to

investigate the profile of the teachers and their perception of the students and Questionnaire C was designed to look into the facilities of the schools.

The sampling frame was based on the list of 134 secondary schools from the State Education Department. This list has classified the secondary schools according to five localities: urban, sub-urban, rural, interior I and interior II (see Appendix). There are 39 secondary schools in the urban locality, 29 in sub-urban, 48 in rural, 9 in interior I and 10 in interior II. For the study with a sampling frame of 2000 students from Forms 3, 4, 5 and 6, 20% of the students were selected randomly from the urban area, 20% from the sub-urban area, 50% from the rural area, 5% from interior I and 5% from interior II. These students were selected from a total of 18 schools distributed over the nine Divisions of the State. However, the actual number of students who responded was 1948. The sample selected from the urban and sub-urban areas acted as a control to highlight the differences, if any, between students from the urban and sub-urban areas and students from the rural and interior areas. Furthermore, the response by ethnicity of the students is very representative of the population composition of Sarawak.

2. PROFILES OF THE STUDENTS

A total of 1948 students completed Questionnaire A and out of this number, 851 (43.7%) are in the urban/sub-urban areas while 1097 (56.3%) are in the rural and interior areas. On the whole, a total of 594 (30.5%) students are in Form 3 where they are not streamed, 453 (23.3%) from Forms 4 to 6 are in the Science stream and 901 (46.2%) from Forms 4 to 6 are in the Arts stream. 50% of the students are female and 49.7% are male (0.3% non-response of their gender).

The comparison of the ethnicity of the students in the urban and sub-urban areas and the rural/interior areas shows that in the urban and sub-urban areas, there are more Chinese students (34.1%) followed by 29.5% Malay students. On the other hand, in the rural and interior areas, the Bumiputera students dominate with a total of 75% excluding the 14.6% Malay students. There are only 9.5% Chinese students here.

A large majority of the students from the rural and interior areas come from families whose monthly incomes are below the poverty line and a significantly large proportion is in the hard core poverty group. In addition, there is great imbalance in monthly family income between and within the ethnicity of the students. A large disparity of monthly family incomes also exists between and within students in urban and sub-urban and rural and interior areas.

Associated with poverty is the low educational background of the students' parents. The majority of the students' parents in the rural and interior areas have either only primary or no formal education. Only a very insignificant percentage of the parents have tertiary education. This lack of functional literacy of the parents implies that the milieu of the families is very restricted and as such there is little motivation for them to change their way of life. Hence, without some form of literacy programme to help them, they and their offsprings will be trapped in the vicious poverty cycle.

The use of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction results in the majority of Malay students being monolingual. In contrast, most of the Iban and other Bumiputera students are multilingual while the majority of the Chinese students are either trilingual or bilingual. With respect to locality, 20.8% of the students in the urban and sub-urban areas are monolingual, 40.4% are bilingual, 32.8% are trilingual and 6.0% are multilingual. On the other hand, 12.1% of the students in rural and interior areas are monolingual, 61.5% are bilingual, 19.7% are trilingual and 6.7% are multilingual. There is a need to promote multilingualism among students as this helps to promote integration and eliminate ethnic and regional parochialism.

3. STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

3.1 PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

On the whole, 62.2% of the students perceive that the main purpose of education is the acquisition of knowledge while only 16.7% of them perceive education as a means of developing their potential or talent. A slightly smaller number of them (14.6%) look upon education as a passport in securing a good job. However, only 4.5% of them associate education with having high income. There is not much difference in the students' perception of education between urban and sub-urban and rural and interior areas with the exception that a higher proportion of the students (68.3%) in the rural and interior areas view education as a means to acquire knowledge compared to 56.1% of their counterparts in the urban and sub-urban areas. However, a higher proportion of the students (19.9%) in the urban and sub-urban areas view education as a means of developing their potential or talent compared to 13.4% of their counterparts in the rural and interior areas.

3.2 CURRENT ISSUES

In order for the students to play a meaningful role in the process of nation building, they need to have an operational understanding of the pertinent current socio-economic and political issues of the country. In this survey, the students were asked to rate 15 current issues in order to test their perception or awareness on a five point scale (5 = UNDERSTAND FULLY, 4 = UNDERSTAND, 3 = SOMEWHAT UNDERSTAND, 2 = UNDERSTAND A LITTLE and 1 = DO NOT UNDERSTAND). Although no attempt was made to investigate the operational awareness of the variables, the students were asked whether they have heard and understood these variables conceptually.

The overall mean score of students in urban and sub-urban areas pertaining to current issues is 2.95 which is bordering the score of 'SOMEWHAT UNDERSTAND'. The overall mean score of students in the rural and interior areas is 2.61 which is between 'SOMEWHAT UNDERSTAND' and 'UNDERSTAND A LITTLE' and this is significantly less than their urban and sub-urban counterparts at $\alpha = 0.01$ level of significance. The lack of awareness of current issues for students in the rural and interior areas could be due to the lack of mass media and libraries with up-to-date

reference materials. This curtails their social horizon and hence, it is not surprising that being a school teacher constitutes the most popular first choice of their ambition.

Table 1 shows the percentage of students who indicated that they 'DO NOT UNDERSTAND' or 'UNDERSTAND A LITTLE' about the 15 current issues. The ranking of the issues which the students can hardly understand shows that whatever the ranking of the issues, the percentage of students in the rural and interior areas is higher than the percentage of students in the urban and sub-urban areas. This shows that on the whole, students in the rural and interior schools are less informed of the current issues than their counterparts in urban and sub-urban schools. Even for common issues like 'AIDS, drug addiction and Amanah Saham Nasional', students in the rural and interior schools are at a disadvantage in receiving the information which is reflected in their ignorance of these issues.

Table 1 Percentage of Students who 'do not understand' or 'understand a little' of the current issues by locality

Current Issues	Urban/Sub-urban		Rural/Interior	
	% of students	Ranking	% of students	Ranking
Second Outline Perspective Plan	83.0	1	84.8	1
National Economic Consultative Council	72.4	2	73.4	2
Industrial Master Plan	52.6	3	63.4	4
National Development Policy	52.2	4	63.1	5
East Asia Economic Group	45.8	5	58.7	6
Malaysian Incorporated	44.4	6	63.6	3
Amanah Saham Nasional	28.0	7	35.0	10
Privatization	27.4	8	44.7	7
70 Million Population Policy	26.0	9	39.2	8
Sixth Malaysia Plan	25.6	10	37.5	9
New Economic Policy	18.7	11	26.4	12
Leadership by Example	15.9	12	18.4	14
AIDS	15.0	13	33.9	11
Vision 2020	13.7	14	20.1	13
Drug Addiction	1.8	15	6.6	15

4. STUDENTS' CONCERNS ABOUT CURRENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

The students' interests and concerns of socio-economic issues of the country in general and state in particular are factors that reflect the life of students in society. To find the

level of concern on sixteen selected current issues, the students were asked to state their degree of concern on a five point scale (5 = VERY CONCERNED, 4 = CONCERNED, 3 = MODERATELY CONCERNED, 2 = A LITTLE CONCERNED and 1 = NOT CONCERNED). It should be noted that being concerned about something is not the same as thinking it is important. Being concerned means that one thinks about it frequently and would like if possible to do something about it personally.

The three issues which the students are most concerned about are environmental pollution, the worsening condition of dwelling places and the lack of financial means for further studies. The overall mean scores for these issues are 4.39, 4.33 and 4.19 respectively. Ranking fourth and fifth in terms of mean score are political stability and difficulty in obtaining places in local universities and ITM. All these indicate that whilst the students are concerned about environmental pollution from without and within, they are also concerned about the twin problems of financial support and opportunities to pursue tertiary education locally. On the other hand, they are least concerned about issues such as the lack of water supply, the lack of electricity and the lack of entertainment facilities.

The mean scores of the students from both the urban and sub-urban and rural and interior areas are ranked and the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient is found to be 0.838. This implies a high positive correlation between students from urban and sub-urban and rural and interior areas with respect to the sixteen socio-economic issues asked. However, students from the urban and sub-urban areas are more concerned about poverty than students from rural and interior areas. The issue of poverty ranks eighth for students in the urban and sub-urban areas while the issue ranks thirteenth for students in the rural and interior areas. This is probably due to the fact that in the urban and sub-urban areas, any significant increase in cost of living is easily felt whereas in the rural and interior areas the impact of increase in cost of living is less. Furthermore, students from the urban and sub-urban areas tend to have a wider social horizon, that is, they are able to see all the issues and problems that affect their families, communities and country as a whole through exposure to the mass media. Living in relative affluence, it is easier for them to see the disparity and understand the problems of those living in poverty, whereas those from the rural and interior areas are less exposed to the mass media and the majority of them have parents with no formal or only primary education and hence they become less concerned with the issue of poverty than their counterparts from the urban and sub-urban areas.

In spite of the relatively high overall coefficient of rank correlation of 0.838 which gives a coefficient of determination of 0.702, the residual differences are large enough to result in significant difference at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of confidence between the mean scores of students from the rural and interior and urban and sub-urban areas. This is shown in Table 2. Hence, there is reason to support the hypothesis that students from urban and sub-urban areas are generally more concerned about current socio-economic issues than students from rural and interior areas. However, these students are relatively unconcerned about issues relating to the lack of transportation, the lack of electricity, the lack of reading material and difficulty in obtaining places in teachers' training college and vocational school and ITM.

5. STUDENTS' OPINION OF VARIOUS SUBJECTS

Students in school have to take various subjects depending on the level or stream they are in and their ability. However, in most cases they do not have a choice. When given the chance to state the difficulty of each subject, students find Bahasa Malaysia to be comparatively easier than English, Mathematics and other science subjects. English is significantly more difficult for the rural and interior students than for the urban and sub-urban students where 57% of the rural and interior students find this subject difficult compared to 27.8% of the urban and sub-urban students. On the other hand, Biology is significantly easier for rural and interior students than for urban and sub-urban students but the reverse is true for Chemistry.

With respect to SPM Mathematics, students in Forms 3, 4 and 5 were asked their opinions on SPM Mathematics and to forecast their performance whereas Form 6 students were asked to list their SPM Mathematics results. One very significant finding is the aversion of students at Form 3 level to Mathematics. An alarming 47.8% of students in the rural and interior areas intend to stop taking Mathematics at SPM level compared to 26.2% of the students in the urban and sub-urban areas. Furthermore, among the rural and interior Form 3 students who intend to take SPM Mathematics, 29.7% feel that they have the ability to just pass the subject and 4.1% feel that they may even fail the subject. In addition, out of the Forms 4 and 5 students who know exactly what the subject is like as they will be sitting for the exam, 37.0% of them expect only to pass the subject and 9.7% expect to fail. However, the actual results of SPM Mathematics obtained by rural/interior students who are in Form 6 shows that 77.3% failed the subject, 17.0% just managed to pass and only 5.7% managed to get a credit. No student obtained distinction. For comparison purpose, 41.9% of the urban and sub-urban Form 6 students failed, 17.6% just managed to pass, 30.0% passed with credit and 10.5% passed with distinction. The rural and interior students in fact, find Mathematics to be relatively more difficult than the urban and sub-urban students. Moreover, the teachers are very concerned about the students' weaknesses in Mathematics as the lack of competency in Mathematics will hinder students from pursuing courses in Science and Technology which in turn will contribute to the lack of technocrats in the future.

6. STUDENTS' ASPIRATIONS

The aspirations of the students are not very high as they are mainly influenced by their subject weaknesses, parental income and locality. Since most students perceive Science and Mathematics as difficult, the choice of ambition to be engineers and doctors do not rank very high. In fact, the teaching profession seems to be the most popular especially in the rural and interior areas as 59.3% of the students in the rural and interior areas chose teaching as either their first, second or third choice compared to 40.1% of their counterparts in the urban and sub-urban areas. Evidently, the students in the rural and interior areas tend to look up to the teaching profession as the best and the most well-respected profession. Besides that, teachers also contribute a lot towards decision-making among the rural and interior communities. Furthermore in terms of remuneration, the teaching profession ranks second with a mean value of \$1391. In the rural and interior areas, a relatively secure job with such high pay is certainly attractive to the students.

Table 2 Ranking of mean scores of students' concerns about current socio-economic issues by locality

Socio-Economic Issues	Urban/Sub-urban		Rural/Interior	
	Mean Score	Ranking	Mean Score	Ranking
Environmental pollution	4.50	1	4.30	2
Worsening condition of dwelling place	4.27	2	4.37	1
Political stability	4.25	3	4.03	6
Lack of financial means for further studies	4.22	4	4.17	3
Difficulties in obtaining a place in local institutions of higher learning/ITM	4.12	5	4.10	4
Unemployment	4.09	6	4.04	5
Increasing cost of living	4.02	7	3.74	11
Poverty	3.96	8	3.68	13
Lack of medical services	3.91	9	3.87	9
Lack of reading material	3.88	10	3.93	8
Extensive lumbering activities	3.87	11	3.86	10
Lack of water supply	3.80	12	3.54	14
Difficulties in obtaining a place in teachers' training college/polytechnic/vocational school	3.70	13	3.94	7
Lack of electricity	3.68	14	3.43	15
Poor transportation system	3.60	15	3.70	12
Lack of entertainment facilities	2.75	16	2.35	16
OVERALL MEAN SCORE	3.91		3.82	
STANDARD DEVIATION	0.40		0.47	
Z TEST STATISTIC	2.22*			

* indicates significant difference at $\alpha = 0.05$ confidence level.

Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient, $R_s = 0.838$
with T-statistic = 5.749 (significant at $\alpha = 0.01$)

The second and third ranking jobs are accountants and businessmen respectively for students in the urban and sub-urban areas compared to police and nurses for students in the rural and interior areas. This indicates the different levels of aspiration between students in the two areas. In the urban and sub-urban areas, they are more exposed to the commercial sectors and as such they can associate themselves with accountants or businessmen. On the other hand, in the rural and interior areas, the police and nursing professions seem to attract the students as they are associated with authority and power to help other people besides being the next best professions to teaching.

In the urban and sub-urban areas, the status of police and clerks are ranked as eighth and ninth respectively by the students although the socio-economic status of these two professions are not as high as accountancy or business. On the other hand, in the rural and interior areas, professions like accountancy, engineering and lecturing are given low ranking of seventh, eighth and ninth respectively in spite of the fact that the socio-economic status of these professions rank high. This could be due to the fact that in the rural and interior areas, there is hardly any opportunity for them to meet an accountant, engineer or lecturer to know anything about their work. Students are not self-motivated towards professional careers as they do not see the need to work hard due to the kind of exposure that they receive and the environment that they live in.

There will be a need for well trained technicians, computer programmers and other skill related professionals. However, only 1.2% of the students want to be technicians, 1.7% want to be computer programmers and 6.4% aspire to be engineers. This could be due to the lack of industrial environment in Sarawak and the fact that 81% of the manufacturing establishments are small, having less than 50 workers and they are mainly family run, offering very low and unattractive remunerations. The students also have the misconception that the work of technicians is lowly paid, dirty, dangerous and difficult. Furthermore, the prevailing view held by society is that work in such a sector is of low prestige because traditionally, technicians acquire their skill through informal apprenticeship requiring little or no academic qualification.

In order to prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow which are skill and knowledge intensive, there is definitely a need to promote the science and technical courses at the tertiary level especially among the students in the rural and interior areas. In addition, these students should be made aware of other available professions apart from teaching or nursing.

7. STUDENTS' AWARENESS AND CHOICE OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

Students have to be aware of tertiary institutions available for their post-secondary school education so that they will not miss the opportunity of enrolling in the courses offered. The tertiary institutions were grouped into four main categories: Local Universities or Institutions of Higher Learning, Vocational, Technical or Training Colleges, Private Institutions and Overseas Institutions.

In the first category, the MARA Institute of Technology (ITM) is the most well-known

institution of higher learning in both stratum. This is probably the result of frequent academic missions launched by ITM Sarawak Branch to various schools in all parts of Sarawak especially the rural and interior areas regarding the academic opportunities and courses offered by ITM. Most of the other local universities are also quite well-known among the students except for the two new universities, namely Universiti Islam Antarabangsa (UIA) and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). Universiti Malaya (UM) is at the top of the list after ITM among the urban and sub-urban students whereas Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (UPM) comes next for the rural and interior students. UPM has a branch campus in Bintulu, Sarawak.

In the second category, Teachers' Training Colleges are the most well-known institutions among students in both the urban and sub-urban and rural and interior areas. This is probably due to the fact that most of their teachers have been trained in these colleges and they also get to meet trainee teachers from these colleges who are occasionally sent to their schools for teaching practice. Thus, they naturally get to know more about these colleges. Vocational schools are the next popular as currently there are five vocational schools in various parts of Sarawak.

The existence of private colleges is hardly known to the students especially those in the rural and interior areas. This is probably due to the lack of information and mass media especially newspapers as private colleges normally advertise in the newspapers only. There is also a great difference in the awareness between students in the urban and sub-urban areas and those in the rural and interior areas regarding overseas institutions. Understandably, those students in the urban and sub-urban areas are more aware of these institutions as they are from more affluent family background and are more likely to have relatives or friends who have studied in overseas institutions.

Institut Teknologi MARA (ITM) is the most popular choice of institution for further studies as more than half of the students (53.5%) in the survey indicated ITM as their first, second or third choice. The next popular choices are Universiti Malaya and Teachers' Training Colleges respectively. However, the choice of tertiary institutions for students in the urban and sub-urban areas is different from that for the students in the rural and interior areas. For students in the urban and sub-urban areas, their overall choice of tertiary institutions shows that their most popular choice is Universiti Malaya which is followed by ITM. On the other hand, the most popular choice for students in the rural and interior areas is ITM which is followed by Teachers' Training College. As the students in the urban and sub-urban areas aspire to be teachers, accountants and businessmen (the three highly ranked ambitions), the best local institution of higher learning for them would be Universiti Malaya. Although ITM is also one of the best institutions to pursue these three ambitions, it ranks second in this case because ITM is only for Bumiputera students whereas there are more Chinese in the urban and sub-urban areas than in the rural and interior areas. In the rural and interior areas, the students aspire to be teachers, policemen and nurses (the three highly ranked ambitions). These students chose ITM because nearly all of them have heard of ITM. Their preferred choice of Teachers' Training Colleges rather than universities shows that either they do not know that they can do a Diploma in Education at the universities after obtaining a first degree or they prefer to be trained only as teachers for Primary schools or lower Secondary schools. In addition, they may not even have the confidence that they will be able to enter university to pursue a course.

8. STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF FINANCIAL AIDS/SCHOLARSHIPS

Although the majority of the students depend on their families to finance them in their studies, the students were asked whether they have heard of the various financial aids or scholarships available. They were also asked to state whether they have ever applied for or received a scholarship. The financial aids or scholarships mentioned were: Textbooks-on-Loan Scheme, Yayasan Sarawak Scholarship/Loan Scheme, Shell Scholarship, Petronas Scholarship, Tunku Abdul Rahman Scholarship, Bank Negara Junior Scholarship Awards, Federal Scholarship and Shell Excellence Award (Anugerah Cemerlang Shell).

Overall, the majority of the students have heard of all the mentioned financial aids and scholarships. In addition, the percentage of students in the urban and sub-urban areas who are aware of these financial aids and scholarships is higher than their counterparts in the rural and urban areas. The two main scholarships and loans are Yayasan Sarawak Scholarship/Loan Scheme and Federal Scholarship. The percentages of students who have received these are 5.7% and 11.0% respectively and these percentages are lower in the rural and interior areas than in the urban and sub-urban areas.

9. TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF CURRENT ISSUES

Teaching is a noble and important profession as teachers lay the foundation for the creation of doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants, architects and even politicians. Teachers nurture and develop the students of yesteryear to become the greatest minds of the world today and they will continue to prepare the present students for tomorrow. Effective teachers are expected to have up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the pertinent current socio-economic and political issues of the world in general and the country in particular. Fifteen selected current issues ranging from drug addiction to the Second Outline Perspective Plan were used and the overall mean score shows that the teachers somewhat understand them. While teachers have fair understanding on issues such as drug addiction, leadership by example, AIDS and National Economic Plan, they were relatively not well-informed on issues such as Sixth Malaysia Plan, National Development Policy, East Asia Economic Group, Industrial Master Plan, National Economic Consultative Council and Second Outline Perspective Plan. Peninsular Malaysian teachers have a significantly better understanding on current issues than Sarawak teachers. Degree holders and the male gender also score significantly higher in the level of understanding than non-degree holders and the female gender.

10. TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES

Students nowadays are said to have increasingly negative values, attitudes and principles in life. These attitudes result in low quality output especially among the Bumiputeras. For example, *"at the convocation of Universiti Sains Malaysia in 1989, out of the 33 graduates who received gold medals and book prizes, only one was a Bumiputera. In addition, 21 graduates received the First Class Honours but none of them was a Bumiputera. However, 249 Bumiputera students graduated with Third Class Honours compared to only 39 non-Bumiputera students"*. (Zulkifli Yusof, 1989).

One of the serious problems is that the students do not like reading but prefer to take part in activities that do not help to improve their academic performance. In addition, the students are very passive and shy especially in class, have no self-confidence and are scared to give their opinions. Besides that they do not give full attention to the teacher during class, they are not interested in their studies and are too lazy to complete class exercises and homework given by the teacher.

Other problems include the decline in discipline and moral of the students like resorting to unhealthy inclinations such as truancy, smoking, having long hair, quarrelling or stealing. In addition the students tend to have negative values, attitudes and principles of life especially in their relationship with their teachers, parents and the older generation. These problems are slightly more serious in the rural and interior areas compared to the urban and sub-urban areas.

The problems which are significantly more serious in the urban and sub-urban areas than the rural and interior areas are that the students are not serious in their studies due to lack of awareness of the importance and necessity of education, that they are apathetic towards learning, that they have poor leadership qualities and that the students have low level of maturity, do not possess critical thinking skills, are not creative and are unable to argue well. However, the problems of indulging in unhealthy activities like drug abuse, glue sniffing or gambling and following the Western culture and values which are not suitable are quite serious in the urban and sub-urban areas compared to the rural and interior areas.

11. SCHOOL FACILITIES

The physical facilities of some schools in Sarawak leave much to be desired. In 1987, 67% of the structures of secondary schools were permanent buildings, 26% were semi-permanent, wooden buildings with cemented floors and 7% were temporary buildings built entirely of wood. (Ministry of Education, 1989). In addition, 73% of the schools were in good condition whereas 24.8% were in partially dilapidated condition, and less than one per cent were in dilapidated condition. Out of the 83 secondary school hostels, 56.6% were in good condition while 42.2% were in partially dilapidated condition. Thus, it is not surprising that in some schools, the dining halls are also used as multi-purpose halls for school assemblies and games. In addition, some schools do not even have proper staff-rooms for the teachers and in some cases, no room is allocated for the library which stock very limited and outdated books.

12. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Sarawak, the largest state of Malaysia has vast rural and interior areas which are difficult to reach. As such students in the rural and interior areas are definitely at a disadvantage compared to students in the urban and sub-urban areas as the latter are more exposed to modern technology. The success of Vision 2020 depends on the quality of the future workforce which comes from the present school system. The study

shows a wide gap between the students' aspirations and the aims of Vision 2020. Students are not interested in jobs which are technical or skill-based although future job market requires high-level technical skills, management and entrepreneurial capabilities. Hence, much needs to be done. Definitely both teachers and parents have to play their respective roles in motivating the students who need to be encouraged to do well in Mathematics, Science and English although they perceive difficulty in these subjects. They should supplement and complement the role of the school because children nowadays succumb easily to social vices. This calls for greater parent-teacher interaction to change the negative attitudes of the younger generation. However, adult attitudes have to be changed before anything else because they directly affect the child in his social and academic environment.

APPENDIX

DEFINITION OF LOCALITIES

According to the Education Department of Sarawak, the State is divided into five localities for the classification of the schools. The classification is made for processing the applications for the transfer of secondary school teachers in the State. The five localities are defined as follows:

Urban

Schools in the urban locality are defined as schools located in the main towns which have become the most popular place of reference to the majority of the teachers and are very well equipped with facilities either in the schools or the towns concerned.

Sub-Urban

Schools in the sub-urban locality are defined as schools which are located in the major towns other than those in the urban locality which have become the second most popular place of reference of the teachers and are well equipped with facilities either in the schools or the towns concerned.

Rural

Schools in the rural locality are defined as schools which are located outside the classification of urban and sub-urban localities with moderate facilities either in the schools or the towns concerned.

Interior I

Schools in Interior I are defined as schools located in areas outside the district administrative centres with poor communication facilities even though facilities in the schools concerned are well equipped.

Interior II

Schools in Interior II are defined as those located outside the area defined under Interior I. They are not very isolated (such as the conditions in primary schools) and still can be reached by various modes of transportation. From the aspect of place of reference, schools in this location are seldom picked and the number of teachers who are applying to be transferred out is large.

Source: *Education Department of Sarawak, "Klasifikasi Sekolah Menengah Sarawak untuk Proses Pertukaran Guru Sekolah Menengah"*.

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